

The University of Chicago

MEDINET HABU DEMOTIC OSTRACON 4038

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE
HUMANITIES IN CANDIDACY FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF ORIENTAL LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES

1938

By

RICHARD ANTHONY PARKER

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Medinet Habu Ostrakon 4038 was found in 1928 in a hole made by ancient Sebbakhin in the northern part of the inner inclosure wall of the temple of Medinet Habu. This is in the square M/12 on the plates in the publication of the excavation.¹ As shown on Plate 32, this comprised a part of the ancient town of Djéme, reference to which is made in line C 16 on the ostrakon.

It consists of a jar, now broken with some fragments missing, approximately 70 cms. in height and 20 cms. in diameter. Written on it, in panels drawn by the scribe, are four long columns of demotic, forming one document, and two small tables of accounts, which have no direct connection with the larger document. The writing is the same in all six columns. It is the work of a practiced scribe, and is, in the main, well-formed and legible. Some haste and want of attention is apparent, as mistakes, corrected or unnoticed, are not infrequent. In places, weathering has reduced the legibility of the writing.

Paleographically and grammatically, the ostrakon shows close agreement with the Demotic Magical Papyrus of London and Leiden, dated to the third century A.D. If the interpretation of line C 6 as a reference to Zenobia, Queen of Palmyra, can be accepted, the terminus ante quem for the ostrakon would be 271 A.D., a date according well with the paleographical and grammatical data.

As far as the contents of the large document is concerned, the ostrakon appears to be unique, and published demotic material offers little aid in its interpretation. Unknown words and words of uncertain meaning abound, and the present translation suffers greatly from this fact. It is hoped, however, that a sound basis for future work is herein provided.

¹Uvo Hölscher, The Excavation of Medinet Habu, I: General Plans and Views (OIP, XXI [Chicago, 1934]), Pls. 12, 14, 32.

The following symbols are used in the translation:

- () indicate additions by the translator;
- [] indicate restoration;
- [] indicate a varying degree of uncertainty;
- < > indicate emendation.

The numbers in round brackets are line numbers.

Translation

Column A

(1) Contents of the agreement which Talames, (2) daughter of Imuthes, has made, she giving her garden with respect to (3) his agreement to Peftumont, son of Usaf: "If (4) you intend to be gardener for me (5) in my garden, then you are to give water to it. You are to give [2]8 (6) drawings of water to it, in the proper measure of 28 (7) hins of water to the [pot], and you are to give 20 drawings (8) [at the beginning of] the water of [inundation] and 20 [afterward]. You are to [connect] (9) the [dyke] to my garden [against] the drawing which you (10) shall cast; and you are to put it behind the gardens; (11) and you are not to cause me to compel you to do it. I am (12) to ask you for your work at evening, and you are to give it (13) to me, when it is complete and whole. And you are to twist and splice (14) 200 ([oubits]) of plait; and you are to (15) stitch 4 [dirt]-baskets; (16) and you are to give them [corded rims]; and you are to give them (17) their [handles]. And you are to make them as your (18) work at evening, and you are to give them to me, when they are (19) complete, ([for]) the cutting which is to be (made) to my (20) garden. And you are to go to 'The Island of the (21) Atum,' and you are to bring [fibers] (22) of [palm-leaf] to it, (namely, from) 'The Island of the (23) Atum' to my garden." (24)
..... (25) "You have not [caused] it, my eyes being
(26) for sparrows and food for crows. (27) And you are to cause that I [find] them [hanging] (28) [above] me. And I am to ask you for your (29) dung

three times daily; (30) and I am to probe it with a [stalk] (31) of [flax].
The [new reed] (32) which I shall find in it, I am to [take] [[for it]]
(33) one obol to the [new reed] (34) among them." He said to her: "My
mother, (35) if a friend of mine gives me (36) a bunch (of grapes), I am to
eat it," (37) [[She said to him]]: ".... eat in (38) [[my]] [garden]

Column B

(1) [without] cutting my garden at night (2) and saying: 'A
friend of mine (3) is [the one] who gave to me a bunch of grapes.' If you
(4) are [a] satisfactory and a good man, a man (5) [who] cultivates my garden
by labor, I will cause (6) that you know it from your [first] wages (7) [at]
your [great lady]

If (8) [you] wish it in wheat, I will give it
(9) to you [at] your [great lady]. (10) If wheat is what you want,
(11) she [guiding] you to take wheat, I will cause (12) that your
three (13) times monthly, it not having been agreed to (14) by me to give
to you wheat; (or) I will give (15) it to you [at your responsibility] in
gaga-bread (16) [of] the, before it has been agreed to (17) by me to
give to you wheat. If, (however), (18) it be agreed to by me to give to you
(19) wheat, I will give it (20) without [substitution], by the nation
(21) of the [handful] [[at the threshing-floor]] (22) of the [of]
the (23) great [of the], (24) one artaba [[being 1]]4
mations." (25) "You [pound] it and you (26) [grind] it. You [[shall]] ...
.. it (27) on the [gaga-leaves] (of) the (28), which you will bring
(29) [at your responsibility], and you shall not (30) yourself [except]
them to eat them. (31) If you wish it (32) [in gold], gold being what [you]
wish, (33) I will have you brought (34) to the three times (35) month-
ly, it not having been agreed to (36) by me to give to you gold.
(37)

Column C

(1) (If) you are arrested, (2) I [will come] forth, [if [they] say]: (3) 'Come! Be surety in regard to him, (4) namely, thy garden-er.' If, (however), it be agreed to (5) by me to give to you gold-(pieces), I will give them (6) to you in gold of the [infamous] Queen, 'Old Woman.' (7) Gold, you shall receive its value (8), before they have taken [them] from you (9) to apply them for your taxes. (If) you (10) do not want them in <gold>, (but) you want them (11) in refined bronze, I will give it to you [at] (12) your [great lady] If refined bronze-(pieces) are (13) what you want, I will give them (14) without ([in]) (15) bronze of (the) quarter of (16) Djūme, ([or]) (17) of Khennēs. Bronze, (18) you shall receive its value (19) on the bank, they not having taken them from you (20) to apply them for your taxes."

(21) Contents of the agreement which Peftumont, son of Usaf, has made to (22) Talames, daughter of Imuthes: "If you (23) will do these [thus], I not having had to make (any) claim (24) against you regarding these [again, I] wine-press (25) Talames, daughter of Imuthes, (26) When you are coming and when you are to come (27) to my garden, you are to [wear] a (28) on your head because of the sunshine, and a pair of work-shoes (29) on your feet because of the [stones]; (30) you are to gird yourself [away from their strength] [with] (31) a [leather apron because of] a (32) my [singer]; you are to bring a (33) spear with you (34) because of the hyena; you are to bring a sword (35) with you because of the wolf; you are to bring (36) [a] because of the small cattle.

Column D

(1) The [frogs] have finished giving birth (2) under the bricks of your (3) An iehneumon has given birth under the (4) of the of [marsh]. The sheep (5) which have been selected by the shepherd, you [will] find (6) on <their> The small cattle (7) which escaped from

the herders, you will (8) find on their great The (9) grape
(10) which has come forth, its eye not having been [ashamed], (11) she shall
gather into (a) basket (12) which is What she carries (13) [by] ...
..., it being [disposed of]; (14) what she takes to (the) wine-press, it being
[bruised]; (15) what she sends to (the) vat, it being (16): what she
[transfers] (17) [[to]]; what she takes to (18) [since (the time
of)] oil-crop; what she (19) [[takes]] of clay and dung (20)
before her (21): she is to load them (22) [on the]; and
you are to (23) [pack-animals] with them; (24) and he is to bring them
[for transport]; (25) and you are to transport (the) [pack-animals] to the
(26); [and] (27) you are to load them on the [wagon];
(28) and you are to appease robber, thief, (29), [trader] with respect
to them; and you are to (30) [[losses]],,, (31);
and they are to be taken to me for destruction. (32) [The] [losses] which she
([will]) receive on (33)[[in]] the [lms-wine] (34) of [Sh]i.... and
the [lms-wine] (35) of [Per-....ben] (36) [to] [me]
[for] your eldest son, (37) [[I]] wine-press]
(38) [Talam]es, daughter of Imuthes,” Written.



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